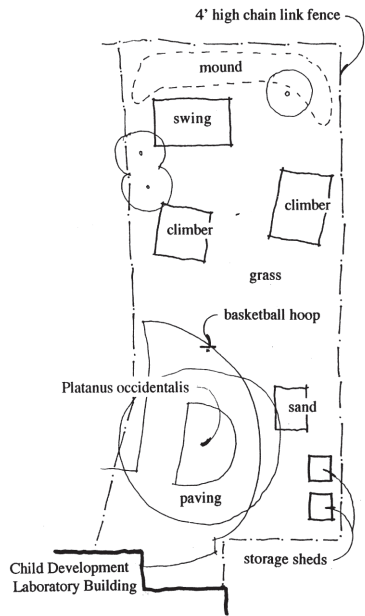




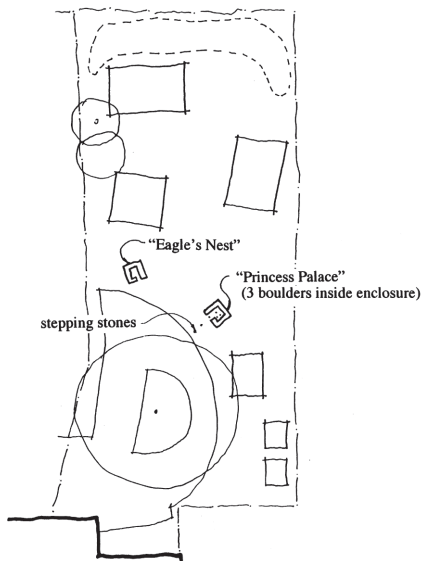
4

Successful projects are investigated in terms of some of the more important design criteria as discussed in the previous two chapters. End Street Park and Sali Park, two examples from Gauteng, were included as precedents. They have had to deal with similar urban problems as are experienced on the project site, such as crime.

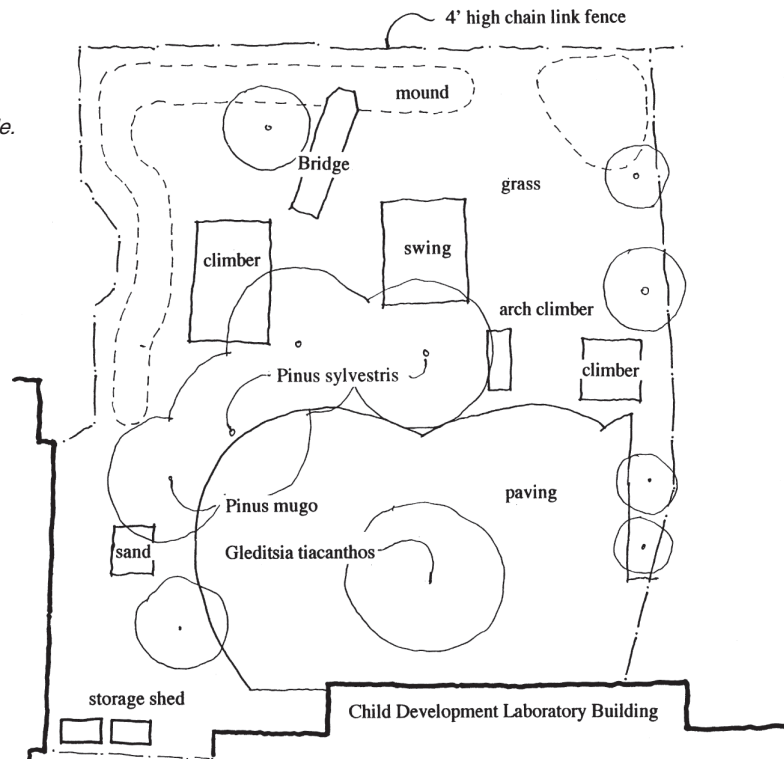
Precedents



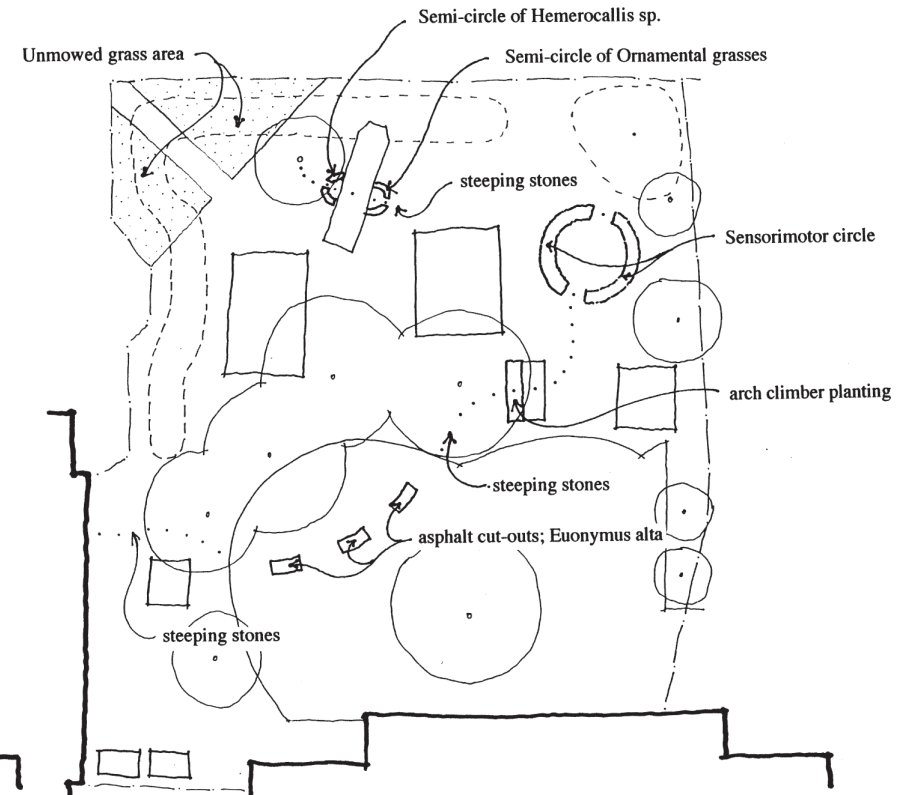
Illus. 4.2: Lab C existing conditions. Not to scale.



Illus. 4.3: Lab C interventions. Stepping stones, boulders and a vegetative room were added. Not to scale. Note the simplicity of the interventions in lab C, which still effected a prominent change in how children perceived and used the space. They gave the interventions names, for example, whilst the existing play equipment were never named.



Illus. 4.4: Lab A existing conditions. Not to scale.



Illus. 4.5: Lab A interventions. Not to scale.

4.1 Interventions at Child Development Centre

Location: Iowa State University

Landscape Architect: faculty and graduate students from the Department of Landscape Architecture and the Department of Human Development and Family Studies.

Client: Child Development Centre, Iowa State University

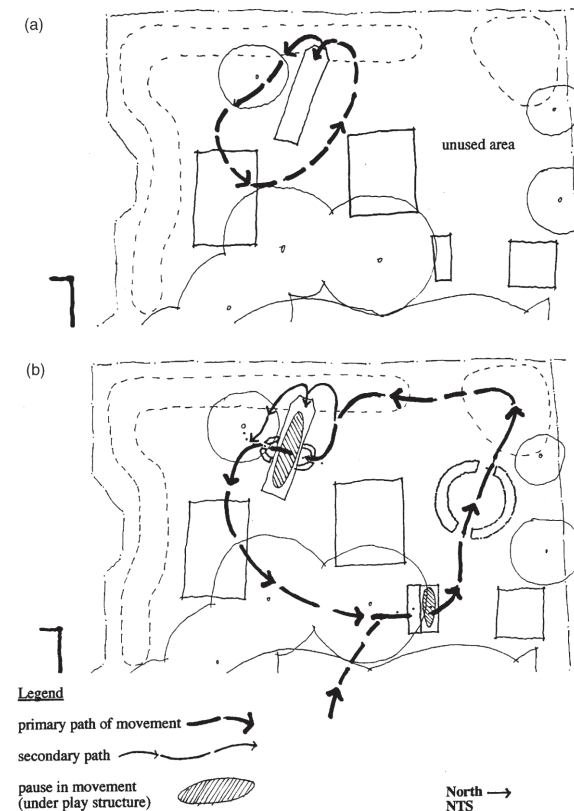
(All images from Herrington and Studmann, 1998:193, 194, 197, 198)

Description: The project researched the effect of man-made and natural¹ interventions in the play yards at the Child Development Centre at the Iowa State University. Children involved in the study were between the ages of 2 to 6 years old. The existing play yards (see Illus. 4.2 and 4.4) were transformed to the conditions shown in Illus. 4.3 and 4.4. Man-made interventions included ice sculptures, wind chimes, a canvas canopy over a play structure, and chalk lines on asphalt. Natural interventions included stepping stones, a water feature, an arch with a climbing plant over it, boulders and vegetative rooms.

General ideas and opportunities: The research showed that the children responded better to the natural interventions as opposed to the man-made interventions, and interacted with it for longer periods of time. The chalk lines were barely noticed. From Illus. 4.6 it can be seen that the interventions also resulted in children using a much larger area of the playground. Children liked the smaller spaces created by, for example, the canvas canopy over the play structure, as well as the vegetative rooms. An area of grass that was not mowed was very popular to play hide-and-seek in, and to have secret meetings. Use of the vegetative rooms had an effect on the social hierarchy of the class. The children showed appropriation of the new spaces created by naming them. The stepping stones, arch and vegetative rooms increased the children's awareness of spaces and routes that lead somewhere. This project shows that very simple natural interventions (e.g. long grass or low planting in a circle), can encourage creative social play.

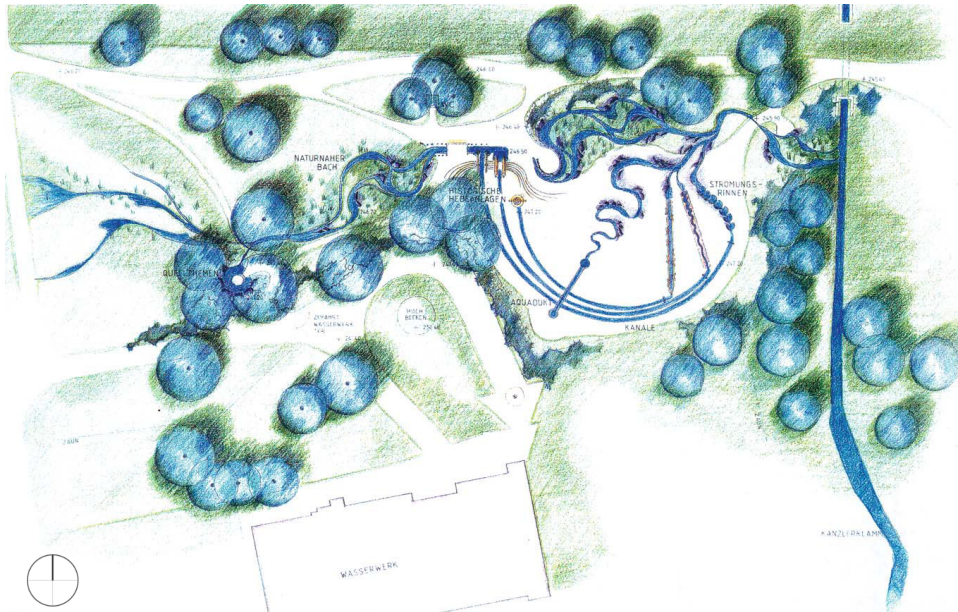
1. See Terminology on page x.

Illus 4.6: New movement patterns created by the natural interventions. Children use a larger part of the playground. (Herrington & Studmann, 1998:199)



4.2 Water Garden

Location: Pforzheim, Germany
Landscape Architect: Herman Dreiseitl
Client: LGS Pforzheim 92 GmbH



Above: Illus 4.7: Plan of Water Garden. Not to scale (Dreiseitl, 2005:150)



Illus 4.9: Fixed moveable parts to manipulate water with (Dreiseitl, 2005:151)

Description: Water flows from a natural area out of a natural stone basin through quiet creeks into the “civilization” section, where it flows through various elements related to water technology, such as lifting devices, channels and wells. There are Archimedean screws, a shaduf, a medieval well-shaft and a rotary pump.

Loose parts: There are no loose parts, but rather moveable parts which can control the flow of water.

Complexity and choice of spaces created: The natural area is quieter while the civilized section is busier with more activities. A wide range of spaces is created, despite the design being very simple.

Nature: Water is the main element in this playground, however, natural stone has been used to create the channels as opposed to bricks or concrete.

Scope for alteration: Children are able to manipulate the flow of the water with open-able weirs and the named devices.

General ideas and opportunities: There are four Archimedean screws, placed in such a way that team competitions are possible. This playground invites children to interact with the water in many different ways, individually and in groups. They learn about technology, history and the characteristics of water in general whilst playing. This park shows how it is possible to have interactive yet not loose parts.

Below: Illus 4.8: Children interacting with water (Dreiseitl, 2005:150)



4.3 Murergaarden

Location: Copenhagen, Denmark
Landscape Architect: Helle Nebelong
Client: Murergaarden Daycare Centre

(All images from Broto, 2010:343, 344 & 348)



Illus 4.10: Low shrubs provide places to explore that still have good visual surveillance.



Illus 4.11: View down spring with water channel.

Description: The pupils of the day-care centre were questioned about their preferences and ideas for redesigning a dilapidated playground which had standard play equipment and hard surfaces. No standard play equipment were used except for a slide. Natural materials were used as far as possible, with many sand surfaces and plantings of shrubs. A spring feeds a channel and paddling pool. Lines created by boulders and low pole fences define spaces.

Loose parts: Large areas of the playground have sand surfaces, and children are able to pick flowers and twigs.

Complexity and choice of spaces created: The playground has good visual surveillance everywhere, yet still have many spaces where children can hide and explore (for example the willow plantings around the paddling pool and along the edges of the playground).

Nature: Natural materials have been used almost everywhere except in some paved areas and for the lining of the water channel. Dead tree trunks replace the traditional climbing frame, and shrubs that attract butterflies are used.

Scope for alteration: Water from the channel and paddling pool can be used for sand constructions.

General ideas and opportunities: Parents were initially concerned that the playground was dangerous and to an extent boring, however, none of the children has been hurt in the park's existence of more than five years. The parents report that the children return home happier than before the playground was installed, and the staff report fewer conflicts in the playground. This shows that being able to play in a natural area has beneficial psychological effects on children.



Illus 4.12: Bridge as threshold.



Illus 4.13: Dead tree trunks as natural climbing frame.



Illus 4.14: Aerial view of park looking north (Vosloo, 2011)



Illus 4.15: Aerial view of park looking south (Vosloo, 2011)



Illus 4.16: Custom-made play equipment (Author, March 2011)

4.4 End Street Park

Location: End Street, Hillbrow, Johannesburg
 Landscape Architect: Newtown Landscape Architects
 Client: City of Johannesburg

Description: End Street Park is a children's playground in the high-density residential area Hillbrow. Due to it being a busy thoroughfare, the two play areas are fenced off: one for smaller children and one for older children, with only one gated entrance each. The play equipment are fixed, yet not standard. There are mounds with Masterfiber covering, and one has Astroturf on. Low walls around the soccer pitches serve as goalposts as well as seating.

Loose parts: There are no loose parts in this park, except for the flowering plants under the trees. However, this is understandable in an area with extremely high crime rates and poverty.

Complexity and choice of spaces created: It is possible to be aware of what is going on in the park at all times, yet there are a few hiding places for children behind the mounds (one has a recess in it too). There is a good variety of sunny and shady spots available, as well as spaces for gathering in smaller and larger groups.

Nature: Trees (existing and new) provide shade, and there are two small patches of lawn and some low shrubbery. Due to the urban nature and high density of the area, it would have been very difficult to incorporate more natural materials.

Scope for alteration: none

General ideas and opportunities: There are no guards watching the gates, however, there are neighbourhood security staff present. The palisade fencing provide physical separation yet visual integration. For the challenges faced, the park could be called a success, even though it does not fully cater for the development of children. Custom-made play equipment provide challenging physical development opportunities. While natural playgrounds do not emphasise the use of bright colours, End Street Park provide colour in an otherwise dull urban environment. This park is a good example of how a children's playpark can be incorporated in a difficult urban area.

Illus. 4.17: Mound with climbing frame provides views to Suikerbosrand Mountain Range. (Author, May 2011)



4.5 Sali Park

Location: Sali Section, Katlehong

Landscape Architect: Outer Space Design Landscape Architects

Client: City of Ekurhuleni

Description: Sali Park is a small (about one hectare) park situated in an economically disadvantaged neighbourhood. Houses overlook the park, which is not fenced off in any way, creating good visual surveillance. It has a large mound with a climbing frame (which is about the highest point in the neighbourhood, affording views to the Suikerbosrand Mountain Range to the south). There are some standard playground equipment such as swings, as well as a mini-soccer pitch (fenced) and a basketball court.

Loose parts: The basketball court has a sand surface, and there is a large heap of sand in the park (presumably used in the construction process). Large amounts of children were observed playing in the sand (both on the heap and in the basketball court). This is the only park visited (see Assessment of Parks in Chapter 3) that had sand available, and its popularity was evident from the way children interacted with it.

Complexity and choice of spaces created: The park has a continuous grass surface with no good space definition, despite there being definite different areas. Singular benches and concrete tables with chairs for groups are provided. When the trees are mature, they will help to define the various areas.

Nature: Most of the park's surface is lawn, with many trees being planted. Some decorative planting has been incorporated. The plants used does not provide any loose parts, however, and there is very little ecological complexity.

Scope for alteration: None, except for the sand heap and the basketball court.

General ideas and opportunities: The children are afforded an opportunity to escape from their everyday environment through the views from the mound. The sand court and heap are very popular. Despite the park having only very basic amenities, it is clearly a popular park, but this could be due to the fact that it is the only park in the neighbourhood, and the high density of residents. It also shows how children use elements differently from how they were intended to be used.



Illus. 4.18: Kinetic equipment are used more than static equipment. (Author, May 2011)



Illus. 4.19: Children building with sand in the basketball court. (Author, May 2011)



Illus. 4.20: Singular and group seating provided. Also note heavy usage of play equipment. (Author, May 2011)